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AUTHOR Moody, James
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ABSTRACT

Language role and language policy in education in Papua New Guinea (PNG) are discussed. First, the history of language policy since the turn of the century is chronicled briefly. The present policy of requiring initial literacy education in English is described and its critics cited, and current proposals to provide literacy education in each child's native language are outlined. The failure of literate multilingualism in PNG, problems of widespread semilingualism, evolving language prejudice, and trends in English pidginization are examined as they are perceived in PNG and in the context of linguistic research. A portion of this discussion focuses on pidginization patterns, code-switching, and code-mixing, with examples provided. Recommendations are made for a language syllabus to replace the current English syllabus, emphasizing, in addition to traditional linguistic and pragmatic aspects of language, the understanding of the interaction between languages. Finally, implications for the teaching of languages for specific purposes are noted. A 107-item bibliography is included. (MSE)

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TOWARDS A LANGUAGE POLICY FOR EDUCATION IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

BY

JAMES MOODY

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES

PAPUA NEW GUINEA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, LAE

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TOWARDS A LANGUAGE POLICY FOR EDUCATION IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

History of Language Policy in Education

Because of the linguistic complexity of Papua New Guinea, it is perhaps not surprising that there has been a long and often acrimonious debate concerning language in education. The controversy goes back at least to the early years of the twentieth century. At that time, children beginning school acquired literacy only in their first languages, but by 1907 the teaching of English was made compulsory in mission schools (Swatridge, 1985: 30). By the 1920s, Hubert Murray (as Lieutenant Governor of Papua) took the position that since English was obviously a superior language, it should also be the language of instruction (P. Smith, 1987: 56). This view was opposed by W.C. Groves, an administrative officer who later became Director of Education. He claimed that it would never be possible to teach English even reasonably well in village schools and that therefore local languages should be used (R.K. Johnson, 1977b: 809). During the 1930s the dispute over language policy was taken up by the two most powerful colonial institutions in the land: "The mission priority of converting the heathen led them to the necessity of using vernacular languages, while colonial regimes intent on government control wished to see the language of the metropole [English] spread more widely" (P. Smith, 1987: 120).

After World War II, the challenge to English came more from Tok Pisin than from Tok Ples. The colonial government, however, adopted a policy of English only, which has remained to the present day. This decision was given authority by the United Nations Trusteeship Council Mission which, in 1953, recommended the abolition of Tok Pisin altogether, partly because the language was considered "corrupt" and "colonialistic" and could be replaced by standard English "by fiat and overnight" (Johnson, 1977a: 443). As it became obvious that such a policy, even if implemented, would never succeed, and as Tok Pisin and other lingue franche became even more widely used, the controversy raged on. In the 1950s the defenders of English reasoned that if English was necessary for secondary education (and no one suggested that it was not), then it should be introduced to pupils as early as possible (Swatridge, 1985: 79). But other languages had their advocates too. Linguists such as S.A. Wurm argued that a first language should be used in the initial years of primary school (Swatridge, 1985: 78). R.A. Hall (1955), supporting Tok Pisin, wrote that there need be no opposition between it and English; he was one of the first to suggest that Tok Pisin could be utilized in teaching English. By the 1970s, there was a new tolerance for Tok Pisin, and at the time of Independence it had become associated with nationalism (Wurm and Muhlhausler, 1979: 258). This change in popular attitude, however, was not reflected in the educational system.

Dutton (1975), a professor at UPNG, argued against the continued use of English as the medium of instruction on pedagogic, economic, psychological and cultural grounds, and urged its replacement by Tok Pisin. Dutton's remarks were reported in the national press, and a spirited national debate ensued, with letters to the editor taking sides for and against English or Tok Pisin (see McDonald, ed., 1976). But this public discussion had little effect on the continued choice of English as the language of education, mainly for two perceived reasons: the role of English as a unifying factor and its use as a tool in national development. One result of this outlook was that PNG embraced the latest English Language Teaching (ELT) programmes. Not only was this "one of the first [non-native-speaking] countries to adopt a policy of English as the sole medium of instruction" (Johnson, 1977a: 445), it also was one of the first to implement a thorough-going functional English language syllabus (R.K. Johnson, 1977b: 820). As a result, "[w]ithout doubt pupils and parents regarded acquisition of literacy in English as their greatest asset" (Swatridge, 1985: 80). But by the 1980s the expectations for English had not been fulfilled. Swatridge's (p. 30) main theme is that education, including the English medium policy, has been the biggest "cargo cult" of all; it has failed to "deliver the goods" to Papua New Guineans, which were promised and expected.

The controversy surrounding language planning has, perhaps, made government officials reluctant to enter the fray. It is politically healthier to perpetuate the status quo by doing nothing than to take a stand against which opponents can react. Writing about the South Pacific area in general, Baldauf (1990: 19) notes that there has been little in the way of language planning at all. In PNG there has been little change in language policy for education since the 1950s. The Department of Education's Five Year Development Plan Committee recommended in 1974 (p. 38) that the medium of instruction in grades one to four should be "the functional language of the community which the school serves" and that although English would be the medium of instruction after grade five, other languages (including Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu) should be encouraged "at all levels of the educational system". Even these modest proposals were considered "too radical a departure from the established system" (R.K. Johnson, 1977a: 450), and they were rejected. Dutton (1975: 5) has claimed that PNG has "no language policy"; this may be true in political terms since, as he points out, there is no statement about language in the constitution. But there has certainly been a de facto language policy for education. Successive governments, before and after independence, have, for better or worse, either implicitly or explicitly, made English the official medium of instruction at all educational levels.

The results of this policy, according to many commentators, including the writers of the Education Sector Review [ESR] (1991a), have been disastrous.

Present Policy and ESR Recommendations

An English medium policy, in effect, foreclosed the possibility of education for most school children (Lang, 1976: 6). The 1991 proposals for educational reform claim that when students begin schooling in an unfamiliar language, education becomes irrelevant to the majority. Youthful products of the system become forces for destruction instead of development (PNG Department of Education, 1991a: 2). English as the medium of instruction has brought about the "mystification" of knowledge rather than facilitating access to it (Ahai, 1989). Moreover, the rate of crime in PNG has been specifically attributed to the use of English in schools (Nekitel, 1984: 10). Current language policy is seen as defeating the stated aims for education in PNG: instead of integrating young people into the community, education has alienated them from it. The result has been an "awful irony" (Kale, 1990: 193). The ESR (1991b, vol. 1: 4) states the case clearly: "The current practice of requiring all children to acquire initial literacy in a foreign language has resulted in many of our primary school leavers remaining functionally illiterate in any language." This document consequently presents language policy as one of the major areas for reform, and it provides an opportunity for resolving almost a century of dispute over language in education.

Although the need for English in national development is acknowledged, the ESR holds that learners should acquire early education and initial literacy in a familiar medium and later transfer their abilities to English or any of the other national languages (vol. 1: 43). Such a policy is advisable for educational, psychological and social reasons (vol. 2: 169 f.). Specific proposals for curriculum reform have been made in the past which foreshadow this recommendation. Among the most detailed are those of Litteral (1975). He advocates that education should begin in the child's first language as the medium of instruction, which would also be the language of initial literacy. Teaching would continue in this language for the first two years or so of primary school. Then, from approximately grade 3 until grade 4 or 5, education would be through the medium of Tok Pisin or Hiri Motu. During this period English would be taught as a separate subject. By the end of primary school (grade 6) the situation would be reversed: English would be the medium of instruction and Tok Pisin/Hiri Motu a separate subject. Thus, a language "continuum" would extend throughout primary school, from a vernacular at the beginning, through a local lingua franca, to English by the end.

Another proposal has been made by Kerema (1989), who concentrates on how teaching should be organized in primary school and presents several possible alternatives. Since language conditions vary throughout PNG, the system chosen should reflect local

conditions. In a Mixed Medium school pupils and teachers would be familiar with a number of languages and would switch between them. In a Dual Medium school a language would be assigned to each subject (e.g., English for science; Tok Pisin for social studies). In a Parallel Medium school students would be initially streamed in classes according to the language they know best; another language would be taught as a subject so that students would learn one other's mother tongue.

Litteral's and Kerema's proposals take into account the fact that Papua New Guineans communicate in a number of languages. Litteral (p. 156) gives the rationale for such programmes as follows: "Each language [in PNG] is used with specific functions in specific situations so that the more languages a person knows, the more people he will be able to communicate with." The question remains, however, of which language to use at particular stages and/or in particular subjects. And this dilemma raises the prospect of reviving the old controversy at a new, more subtle level. Most language polices in PNG, actual and proposed, however antagonistic towards each other they may be, share one assumption in common. They all take it for granted that language planning in education has to be undertaken on an either/or basis. One language or another, it is maintained, must be accepted as the language, or at least the main language, for education in each class and at each stage.

This is also the implication of the ESR (vol. 1, 1991b: 4) recommendation that the medium both for instruction in early primary school and for initial literacy should be "a language which the children speak"; this document also refers to "the local language" and "the language of early education" (emphasis added). A previous PNG Minister for Education, N. Ebia Olewale, who recognized shortcomings in the present system, made the either/or approach explicit when he claimed that "... we will have to rely on learning several languages, but what we have to decide is which languages and the priority to be given to each of them" (quoted in R.K. Johnson, 1974: 261). The assumed necessity to make this kind of decision has, I suggest, contributed to much of the past controversy. As long as language planners feel they must opt for one language over another, then any language policy for PNG will probably be controversial. There is, however, a way of surmounting this difficulty. To pursue it now involves a change of perspective, a sensitivity to how communication in the nation is actually accomplished. This approach involves developing a both/and policy for language in education to replace the either/or one presently followed.

Multilingualism and the Fallacy of Semilingualism

Multilingualism has generally been considered a problem for education in Papua New Guinea. Olewale (1977: 1003) has claimed that it is "a great obstacle to national progress". From this point of view, planning has proceeded in a negative way. For

example, one effect of selecting English as the language of instruction has been to make all children equally disadvantaged, since almost none have it as a first language. But as Kaplan (1990: 5) points out, such reasoning diminishes the positive values of multilingualism. It has been estimated that one-quarter of the world's languages are to be found in Melanesia (Laycock, 1982: 33) and that every adult in PNG knows at least three languages (G. Smith, personal communication). Furthermore, Papua New Guineans have been said to possess an unusual "aptitude and tolerance for learning other languages" (Kale, 1990: 188). Because of the practical need to communicate, children in PNG acquire language skills very well when they are with one another (R.K. Johnson, 1974: 260). For pedagogical reasons alone, it would appear logical for educators to consider such inherent abilities as resources to be exploited, rather than as problems to be solved. But Johnson also points out that students learn languages less well in a classroom situation. Schooling in PNG would appear to have made a potential advantage into an actual deficit.

The inadequacy of pupils' language is a frequent complaint of parents, teachers and employers. It is often held that children in urban PNG have less than competence in any language. Since they grow up speaking two or more languages, this reasoning goes, they are in danger of becoming marginal individuals who are deficient in their second language/s (because they can never gain "total efficiency") as well as in their first (because the frequent use of another language causes them to forget what they once knew). This concept, known as semilingualism, has been a contentious issue in bi- and multilingual societies and educational systems throughout the world (Pieris, 1951; Haugen, 1966; Adler, 1977: 39 ff.). McCarthy (1975: 40) points to the danger that bilingual children in PNG may develop a limited function in both their first and second languages, thus becoming "children without a language". The language competence of PNG students has been faulted from three perspectives. Ahai (1989: 52), for instance, says that communication in English medium schools is "ineffective and inefficient". Lewis (1971: 27) sums up a number of similar criticisms when he notes that at the end of primary school a child is unlikely to have the degree of competence in English that a native speaker has at five years of age.

But a deficiency in English does not necessarily entail skill in another language. There are also complaints that school children fail to respect the integrity of lingue franche and local languages. Speakers of Rural Pidgin are reported to be prejudiced against the anglicised urban variety not only because it is unintelligible to them but also because it is perceived as an inferior way of speaking (Wurm and Muhlhausler, 1979b: 236). The users of the new variety, it is held, do not know their "own" language. As Tok Pisin borrows more and more from English (G. Smith, 1990: 285), speakers of the standard language believe that it is being spoiled. In addition, criticisms are made from the perspective of a child's Tok Ples. The pride Papua New Guineans

take in preserving local dialects and languages is an integral part of patriotism and ethnocentrism (Sankoff, 1977: 284). Speakers of these languages object to what they perceive as corrupt forms used by children who have acquired Tok Pisin and/or English. A child growing up in a town in PNG, then, is likely to be considered deficient in English, Tok Pisin and his/her Tok Ples--and hence labeled semilingual.

The theory of semilingualism has been attacked by linguists and educators, mainly because it cannot be adequately defined, tested or measured. In response to the assertion that a bilingual can hope to attain only "95% efficiency" in a second language, De Camp (1971) wonders how many native speakers of any language are able to exploit its "full potential" and how this ability could ever be assessed. Edelsky et al. (1983) conclude that tests to determine a deficit in bilinguals' language skills are based not on their capacity to communicate in the real world but, rather, on their successful performance of nonsensical tasks demanded by an irrelevant school curriculum. Martin-Jones and Romaine (1986: 28) have criticized the methods of evaluating semilingualism, which are based on isolated and communicatively unrelated structural components of a language. They also question whether the development of skills in one language necessarily involves decreased skills in another. It would appear, then, that there is no linguistic or cognitive justification for claiming large-scale semilingualism among school children in PNG.

Actually, the bi- or multilingual child may have advantages over the monolingual insofar as s/he realizes that there are-- at least-- two ways to say the same thing (McCarthy, 1975: 40). Such awareness may enhance students' intellectual development (Lewis, 1971: 21). Studies in other parts of the world have shown that bilingual children are likely to be more intellectually advanced with respect to concept formation, general mental flexibility and metalinguistic functioning than their monolingual counterparts (Sridhar, 1982: 141; Cummins, 1991: 86). These conclusions are based not so much upon linguistic ability as such but upon an awareness and perception of social reality and a capacity to communicate successfully in a specific context (Haugen, 1973: 73; Cummins, 1991: 77). Students are pragmatically motivated to acquire the language skills they consider essential in real-life situations. Ma and Herasimchuck (1979) stress the importance of what they term the "community context" of bilingualism. They point out that often children in multilingual urban environments exploit two or more languages. They interact with each other far more than they do with monolingual adults. Consequently they generate unique norms of language use.

The Language Ecology of PNG

There are two perspectives from which multilingualism can be approached: (i) in terms of the languages used, and (ii) in terms of the communication which occurs between language users. The

former begins with languages, the latter with what happens to languages. Approach (ii) provides the basis for language ecology (Enniger and Haynes, 1984), which has been designated the study of interactions between language and environment, including "the relationships obtaining between languages and their users". There are four concepts central to language ecology. A code is a communicative system whose complementary parts are combined together to express meaning (see, e.g., Sankoff, 1971: 36). The speech community (Gumperz, 1968) is a group of speakers who share a code as well as a set of social attitudes towards its use. A speech community does not presuppose linguistic uniformity: codes usually consist of different varieties or dialects and, sometimes, of different languages (Raith, 1984: 10). A communicative repertoire (e.g., Enniger and Haynes, 1984: 6) provides a single speaker as well as a speech community with what Halliday (1978) terms a "meaning potential". The speaker has at his/her disposal not only linguistic forms but also an ability to draw upon them in particular situations. The skill to opt for uses of language considered appropriate by the speech community is an important aspect of a speaker's communicative competence (Hymes, 1971).

Gumperz (1968: 385 f.) refers to two types of multilingual repertoires. In one, which he designates as compartmentalized, languages are kept as separate codes. Speakers tacitly agree to assign a set of functions to each language. In bilingual speech communities, these functions can be distributed among H(igh) and L(ow) domains in a system known as diglossia (Fishman, 1967). This concept has been expanded into one of triglossia (Mkilifi, 1972 and Ure, 1982) for multilingual communities such as those often found in urban PNG. A new M(edium) domain is added, so that functions are assigned to a first language or vernacular (L), a lingua franca (M) and English (H). A single individual in the PNG speech community might, for instance, use a Tok Ples when discussing preparations for a traditional ceremony with wantoks, Tok Pisin when discussing the election of representatives to the local government council (both examples given by Wurm, 1979: 8) and English when discussing an academic subject. However, the theory of diglossia cannot account entirely for the complexities of language use in multilingual speech communities undergoing rapid social change. Gumperz's second communicative repertoire is termed fluid. It is characterised by frequent crossing over from one language to another when other circumstances of the communication remain constant. When this happens, the diglossia/triglossia theory of allocating domains to particular language codes is difficult to maintain.

Moving from one language to another has commonly been designated code-switching (e.g., by Hymes, 1978). But when switching is very rapid, the functional distribution (L, M, H) among the various codes is lost. (This conclusion is supported by the research of Sankoff [1971], Fernando [1977, 1982] and Richards [1982: 164]). To account for rapid switching without diglossia, various terms have been used: code-mixing (Kachru, 1978: 27 f.), mix-mix switching (Richards, 1982: 164 ff.), code-swaying (Gib-

bons, 1987: 103) and polyglossia (Platt, 1977). Bickerton (1975: 24) is concerned with this phenomenon in PNG and attributes it to unstable diglossia. It is for him the linguistic result of a process of social mobility, especially in rapidly growing urban areas. Just as old social structures break up, so do formal distinctions between codes. Contacts between ethnic groups mean contacts between the languages they speak, and Bickerton suggests that these languages will begin on a "path of mutual influence". He sees the result as a linguistic continuum in which, for example, English will become more and more "flavoured" with Tok Pisin. Eventually there develops an "urban spectrum containing all linguistically possible varieties intermediate between Tok Pisin and English". Code-mixing can be considered an aspect of this process.

Communication through a Superordinate Code

Writing almost 20 years ago, Bickerton predicted the eventual "pidginization" of English in PNG. There is, indeed, evidence that distinct and recognizable Papua New Guinea varieties of English are developing, influenced by both the English-based Tok Pisin (A. M. Smith, 1986: 69) and by local first languages (Yarupawa, 1986: 73 f.). However, there is another possible scenario for the evolution of PNG's language ecology. Rather than the eventual emergence of a new PNG English or an anglicized Tok Pisin, both languages, together with Tok Ples vernaculars, may continue to function together as one superordinate communicative code, while still preserving the formal features of their component languages. Muhlhausler (1979a: 170) believes that mixing English and Tok Pisin marks "a transitional stage between a clear diglossic situation and the development of a linguistic continuum". The idea that different languages function together in a superordinate code is supported by his statement that the mixing of the two systems will not inevitably lead to the replacement of one by the other and by his conclusion that the continued contact between English and Tok Pisin results in "a new third system" (1979b: 236). Muhlhausler (1979a: 168) points out that the mechanism underlying the mixing of these two languages is similar to that found between Tok Pisin and a local vernacular (1979a: 168). Sankoff (1971) has provided an account of code-switching between Tok Pisin and Buang, a language in Marobe Province. In the language ecology of urban PNG, then, communicative repertoires may consist of elements (morphemes, words, phrases, etc.) from a number of distinct languages, but these elements complement one another and are combined in various ways to achieve communicative meaning in a single system.

Speakers engaged in code-mixing probably do not make distinctions between languages as monolinguals do. Both Bickerton (1975: 25) and Laycock (1976: 92) remark that in PNG the boundaries between separate languages are often blurred and that linguists' ideas of the "individuality and unmixability of language" can be at variance with social reality (Bickerton, ibid.).

Swan and Lewis (1990: 215) emphasize how common this way of communicating is in PNG: "there is a considerable amount of code-switching even in mid-sentence in educated Papua New Guinean speech." Muhlhausler (1979a: 170 f.) has provided the following transcriptions of code-mixing in conversations of students at the University of Papua New Guinea.

(a) Nesonelis olsem, olgeta man i mas save longen ya. Wanpela samting tu ya, sam pipel ol i politically minded na mipela sampela olsem yupela i bein manipulated by others...
(Translation: A nationalist like this, every one should know about him. And something else, some people who are politically minded and some people like you and me have been manipulated by others....)

(b) Ol i ken do whatever they want to. Em nau, mi save. O, I don't like them. So what, laki tru na mi kam....
(Translation: They can do whatever they want. Now I know. Oh, I don't like them. So what, just as well I came....)

(c) (Conversation about the movie Planet of the Apes)
Na wanpela narapela man i tok: "What did you say?", na em i tok, dispela ape i toktok, na em i tok: "No, no, it's me, I said it. What did he say, the bastard?" Em all the other apes, they don't talk, but this one can talk na he got himself into trouble, dispela ape ya.
(Translation: And another man said: "What did you say?", and he said, this ape who was talking, he said: "No, no it's me. I said it. What did he say, the bastard?" All the other apes, they don't talk, but this one can talk and he got himself into trouble, this ape.

When members of a multilingual speech community have the same languages in their repertoires, then rapid moving back and forth between them is not normally done from the sender's or the receiver's ignorance of how to say something in the other language. Neither is it done haphazardly or by chance. Rather, particular combinations are selected because they achieve communicative meaning within the overall superordinate "meaning system" (Kachru, 1983: 235). Muhlhausler (1979a: 167) points out one of the strategies used by the speaker in example (c): to repeat for emphasis the same thing with slight modification in another language (as in this one [English] ... dispela ape ya [Tok Pisin]). Another feature of (c) has been observed by Gumperz (1982: 75) as a common function of code-mixing: to switch to the other language to mark a direct quotation. Throughout the first part of (c) the quotations are in English, but the narrative is in Tok Pisin. In example (a) the English phrases (politically minded and manipulated by others) seem to be intertextual quotations from a political tract or a newspaper report, and the speaker is able to give weight to what s/he is saying by the implied "official" references in English. Example (b) emphasizes

through the switch of language a contrast which is also made literally: an opposition between the speaker and his/her negative feelings towards the people being talked about.

All three of the preceding examples illustrate textual or rhetorical switching, to mark emphasis or contrast or to indicate a stage in the development of the communication (Moody, 1989: 116 f.). The relationships set up here between language and function do not exist independently of these manifestations (e.g., in a diglossic relationship). The significance of mixing is negotiated entirely within a particular exchange (Akere, 1980). Hence, the ability to mix effectively (that is, in ways that are recognized and admired by the speech community) involve not only skills in more than one language but also the imagination to create new combinations of meaningful and appropriate language. Code-mixing, as an aspect of language ecology, then, is "a continual construction of the language system by the speakers themselves rather than a fixed linguistic system" (Raith, 1984: 6).

Wurm (1979: 8) sees the ability to engage in code-mixing as an aspect of a newly emerging PNG contact culture which lies between the traditional and the Western. The superordinate code is a new "language"-- in the sense of a new way of meaning-- for this new culture. Although it retains elements from other cultures/languages, the fact that they are mixed together creates a unique means of communication, reflecting and reinforcing a new way of life. A similar conclusion has been reached for multilingual speech communities in other parts of the world. In parts of urban Kenya, for instance, rapid switching between languages in conversation among peers is accepted as the normal way of talking (Scotton, 1983: 122). Gibbons (1987: 39) concludes that a mixed code in Hong Kong is most likely to be used in an intimate domain: when the interlocutors are close in age, the interaction is informal and the topic is one of mutual interest. Asuncion-Lande and Pascasio (1979: 223 f.) claim that a superordinate code is a more explicit way of speaking in the Philippines than using any single language on its own would be.

Several articles have emphasized children's abilities to code-mix. Lance (1979: 261 f.), writing about bilinguals in the American Southwest, observes that rapid mixing involves a skill other than fluency in both languages; in order for the languages to be "equally accessible for instantaneous use in relaxed conversations," speakers must begin mixing codes from a very early age. A similar conclusion is reached by Serpell (1980) whose evidence shows that primary school children in Zambia accept mixing without question. Children in multilingual communities may possess quite complex repertoires comprising several codes, and they learn to draw on these codes in complex ways (Martin-Jones and Romaine, 1986: 34). These studies all indicate not only how superordinate codes are gaining ground in the language ecology of multilingual speech communities throughout the world, but also how deeply ingrained they are in the "contact cultures" of the speakers who use them from an early age.

A Language Policy for Teaching Communication in PNG

The potential and actual ways a superordinate code can function should put paid to any notion of deficiency in the communicative repertoires of speakers using it. In the language ecology of PNG, any degree of semilingualism in a single language (a contentious issue in itself) can be compensated for by skill in manipulating a superordinate code consisting of several discrete languages in a complementary relationship. Rather than concentrating on the perceived problem of a lack of "total efficiency" in one language, educationalists would do well to exploit, develop and refine the ways communication is achieved through mixing languages. By building upon the foundation of what is accepted as normal linguistic behaviour in the speech community, language policy for education in PNG can help to give schooling a new "relevance to the life of the majority of people" (PNG Ministry of Education, 1991a: 12). Decisions affecting the medium of instruction, the choice of languages to be taught and how best to teach them should all take into account how communication is actually accomplished.

Yalden (1983: 86) observes that there has over the past generation or so been a subtle change in many parts of the world from teaching language for communication to teaching communication through language. By making communication the priority, language teaching has become more responsive to social reality. The use of a superordinate code for communication in the speech community, therefore, justifies a both/and language policy for education. Instead of focussing on skills in either one language or another, the concurrent use of several languages could be taught, studied and adopted as the medium of instruction. This is the logical consequence of teaching communication through language in PNG. In order to illustrate some of the effects of such a policy, its implications for three areas of language education will be considered here: the medium of initial literacy, secondary school syllabus design and teaching language for specific purposes.

1. The Medium of Initial Literacy

The ESR recommendation on language in early education reflects current views in PNG and elsewhere. Although Fasold (1984: 298 ff.) makes the obvious point that teaching children in a language they do not understand is "immoral", he adds that evidence is "inconclusive" regarding the effects of initial literacy in a first language on the acquisition of literacy in a second language. This uncertainty is echoed by teachers in PNG whose opinion is equally divided about whether initial literacy in Tok Pisin would make it easier for students to learn literacy in English later (Nidue, 1988: 227). However, research by Verhoeven (1991: 72), shows that a strong emphasis on instruction in a

first language not only leads to better literacy in that language but also does not retard progress in a language introduced at a later stage of education. In fact there is a likelihood that skills acquired in the first language contribute to ability in the second. The positive influence of the use of a Tok Ples on learning English in PNG was noted by K.R. McKinnon in 1963: "...where children have opportunities to relax occasionally and to use their own vernacular, their attitude to learning English will improve-- they may even do better in English" (quoted in R.K. Johnson, 1977a: 448). Experience has shown that early education in the first language of the child is likely to lead to better, not worse, results in English at a later stage. Billy (1989: 4) reports that students in Enga Province who attended Vernacular Pre-schools are doing much better in their subsequent education than those who have gone through the normal (English-only) system.

Many children entering school in PNG may know a number of languages which, among peers in an urban setting, are used together. This situation justifies more than one language in the classroom. R.K. Johnson (1974: 264 ff.) has suggested that a bilingual teacher in a bilingual class should switch freely between languages, though, he adds, such a suggestion would probably appal monolingual English speakers. This idea is, perhaps, not as appalling now as it may once have seemed. As far as the oral mode is concerned, teachers already adopt such a policy. Nidue (1988) claims that Tok Pisin is used unofficially by many, perhaps most, primary school teachers. This observation is supported by recent evidence from Jimi District, W.H.P. (Yarupawa et al., 1992: 11 f.). Multilingual children tend to prefer teachers who are themselves multilingual, presumably because mutual understanding is increased through two or more languages. Code-mixing in the classroom is conducive to a more relaxed atmosphere and, thus, to better learning (Elias-Olivares, 1976: 133).

It has been claimed that for effective educational development a child needs to be exposed as early as possible to writing in familiar language (Wuillemin, 1984: 5 f.). Initial literacy should be provided not simply in language the child knows best, but the way this language is written should resemble as closely as possible the familiar oral medium (R.L. Johnson, 1979: 149). That "[o]ral competence is the basis for real literacy" (Edelsky et al., 1983: 14) is an especially significant statement in communities where languages have only recently begun to be written. Literacy programmes elsewhere in the world have been adversely affected because materials are produced by translating written English into vernaculars. The result is that texts are boring, awkward and unreal versions of language the child is used to (Moody, 1983). If literacy materials are to be in familiar language and if the language most familiar to the urban child is a superordinate mixed code, then these materials should contain a mixture of languages. This would mean, for instance, texts with the same kind of code-mixing the child is used to in speech.

2. Secondary School Syllabus Design

With the advent of the "communicative" approach to the teaching of English (see, e.g., K. Johnson, 1982; Yalden, 1983), language syllabuses are commonly considered to have two central objectives:

(a) Linguistic: acquiring the internal structures or "rules" of a language (correctness);

(b) Pragmatic: acquiring the ability to use a language to initiate and respond to social situations (appropriateness);

It has sometimes been argued that (a) is a necessary condition for (b) and that to attempt (b) without laying the necessary groundwork of (a) is educationally unsound. On the other hand, Loveday (1982), has made a case for reversing the order and giving the priority to (b) since to know how to communicate takes precedence over a knowledge of formal structures. Communication breakdowns are more likely to be due to pragmatic failures than to linguistic ones (Clyne, 1985: 12 ff.). Most language teachers who follow the functional syllabus now in use in PNG schools (PNG Department of Education, 1987), would probably agree that objectives (a) and (b) should be pursued concurrently. But learning the structures and pragmatics of a single language (English and/or any others) is not sufficient. For a multilingual speech community in which speakers share the same languages and a superordinate code operates, I suggest that a third objective be added:

(c) Ecological: acquiring an understanding of the interaction between languages, an awareness of the complementary functions they perform and the ability to switch between and mix them in meaningful ways.

What is required is a Language Syllabus (or, better, a Communication Syllabus) to replace the present English Syllabus. Some of the problems in using the functional syllabus are considered by Cane (1982). There is, he says, a need for further research into how students will be expected to use English when they leave school. If it is found that certain activities are carried out more frequently through English than others, then the syllabus should give attention to these activities and the language forms they require. When we consider this suggestion in terms of PNG language ecology, the design of a syllabus for overall communication would involve specifying not only functions which are commonly performed in English but also those accomplished through other languages comprising the superordinate code. Ideally this new syllabus would incorporate a set of notions and functions for each language and the forms, styles and registers appropriate to them. Cane also (p. 67) mentions the difficulties of teachers who are not native speakers in implementing the present English syllabus. The proposed Communication Syllabus would, of course, require multilingual Papua New Guineans to teach it.

A syllabus for Communication would not only apportion languages to functions. It would also set out to develop skills in code-switching and code-mixing and give attention to when it is appropriate and inappropriate to mix. Reasons for code-mixing could be ordered according to whether they signal changes in the ideas or topics being communicated, in the interpersonal relationship between the sender and receiver of the message or in the rhetorical structure of the discourse. (See, e.g., Halliday, 1978, for this framework.) This part of the Communication course would train students to exploit the possibilities of mixing languages within the superordinate code to achieve nuances and subtleties of meaning. They would as well be taught to recognize and respond to such uses by fellow members of the speech community. In this way, students would develop their ability to assess a situation and to choose the most suitable code for it, including the possibility of a mixed code. Thus, they would acquire the skills to make the following communicative judgements (expanded from Carswell and Rommetveit, 1972: 5):

(a) whether to speak or to remain silent;
(b) whether to mean x or to mean y;
(c) whether to use one word (or structure) or another to mean x;
(d) whether to use one style/register or another;
(e) whether to use one language or another;
(f) whether to use a single language or to mix languages.

3. Teaching Language for Specific Purposes

One pedagogic domain usually reserved for the English language even in a multilingual speech community such as PNG, is that of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and its various subdivisions-- English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Science and Technology (EST), etc. Partly because of the international organization and power structure of the English Language Teaching profession, the possibility of using other languages for these purposes has rarely been pursued in ESP scholarship, methodology or materials production (Moody, 1992). Most text books for ESP, for instance, take it for granted that the student is or will be engaged in communication with a first-language speaker of English. In fact the ESP movement has flourished around this assumption, which still provides the rationale for language teaching in technical institutions in PNG. Little attention has been given to what is actually involved in communication for specific purposes in the nation or to incorporating this information into teaching programmes.

Historically, one of the reasons for supporting an exclusively English language policy for education was the belief that it is the only possible language for academic, scientific and technological fields. Local languages were perceived as inadequate for communicating complex Western ideas. (See the comments of Murray, e.g., reported in P. Smith, 1987: 55 f.). And yet, it

is clear that other languages are commonly used for these purposes. Various studies have considered some of the problems and possibilities arising from Tok Pisin for soldiers and officers in the army (Bell, 1977), medical staff (Healey, 1977) and agricultural workers (Scott, 1977). There is too, of course, a long tradition of pidgins and local vernaculars in legal, official and administrative work in law courts and government agencies (Lang, 1977; Tomasetti, 1977; Voorhoeve, 1979). University students use Tok Pisin for academic work, both for studying (Swan and Lewis, 1990: 224) and in class (R.K. Johnson, 1977a: 455). Obviously they do not find the language inadequate. In the professional work-place languages other than English are common. Swan (1986: 15) found that more than three-quarters of Unitech graduates use Tok Pisin at work, for example. Language for specific purposes, then, is not limited to English in PNG.

Language policy for specialist education should reflect this social fact. Swan recommends designing tertiary courses to assist students to extend and refine their use of Tok Pisin specifically in professional areas. Ahai (1984: 36) and Hall, 1972: 150) have pointed out respectively that vernacular languages and Tok Pisin are not limited in their ability to express complex or technological meanings. Language systems expand to suit the functional needs of the people who use them. One problem has been the lack of standardization: different specialist terms are introduced by separate groups for the same concept. Appropriate "language engineering," including the teaching of technical subjects in these languages, needs to be controlled by a central body (Wurm and Muhlhausler, 1977: 72), such as a National Translation Service (Muhlhausler et al. 1979: 266 f.). In technical institutions, ESP should be replaced by LSP (Language for Specific Purposes). One aim would be to develop students' capacity to put what they have learned through English, into other languages. This process would contribute to their academic development (LAP), because in order to articulate ideas in another language they would need to understand them thoroughly. It would also make students more productive workers (LOP) by enabling them to impart knowledge to co-workers who have not been fortunate enough to receive advanced education, in a language the latter can understand (Moody, 1992.)

Conclusion

Rossi-Landi (1971) has suggested an homology between language use and economic activity. Just as the value of a manufactured commodity is determined by the labour of the workers who make it, so also the value of a communicative code is gauged by the effort of people to create and use it. Papua New Guineans' linguistic labour has resulted in the complex of languages which function in the "sociolinguistic laboratory" (Wurm, ed., 1979) of the nation. They should respect the value of what they have made. First, in their development, maintenance and preservation of local traditional languages in the face of overwhelming pressures against them (see, e.g., G. Smith, 1992). Second, in the determi-

nation with which they have met every attempt to stamp out the pidgin languages and in their self-confidence to assert the value of these languages in the face of denigration by both well- and ill-intentioned foreign "experts" (see, e.g., R.K. Johnson, 1977a: 459; Laycock, 1982: 35). Third, in their forging a standard local variety of English, so that this language is no longer the vehicle of a foreign culture but a means of expressing local perspectives and a marker of national identity (A.M. Smith, 1978, 1986; Yarupawa, 1986; Barron, 1986). And finally, in enriching and extending their communicative repertoire through switching and mixing various languages, to achieve a wider possible range of meanings in a superordinate code. The time has come for educationalists to formulate and implement a language policy which reflects and supports each facet of this achievement.

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